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## The Rapture: The Next Great Event in Prophecy

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# BIBLE STUDY

by Harold L. Willmington

## The Rapture ~ The Next Great Event in Prophecy

**T**he next great event in prophecy is often referred to as the rapture. Some time ago I received a letter from a very upset viewer of the Old-Time Gospel Hour TV program. In essence, the letter read:

"You people down there in Virginia bother me. Your choir sings songs about an event called the rapture. The TV preacher preaches sermons on the rapture. And you — you've actually written a book on the rapture. Now my concern is this: You folks are singing, preaching, and writing about a word that's not even found in the Bible!"

In answering this letter I agreed that he was indeed correct, inasmuch as the word *rapture* is nowhere to be found among the 774,747 words in the King James Version of the Bible. But I then pointed out that neither are the words *Trinity*, *demon*, *Bible*, or *grandfather* mentioned in that version of the Word of God. But there is a Trinity, there are demons, grandfathers do exist, and the rapture is a reality!

Actually, the word rapture is from *rapere*, found in the expression "caught up" in the Latin translation of 1 Thessalonians 4:17. However, if one so desires, the rapture could be scripturally referred to as the *harpazo*, which is the Greek word translated "caught up" in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. The identical phrase is found in Acts 8:39, where Philip was caught away by the Holy Spirit, and in 2 Corinthians 12:2,4, when Paul was caught up into the third heaven. Or, if you'd rather, the rapture could be known as the *allasso*, from the Greek translated "changed" in 1 Corinthians 15:51,52. *Allasso* is also used in describing the final renewal and transformation of the heavens and the earth. (See Heb. 1:12.) So then, use whatever name suits your fancy. Of course, the important thing is not what you name it, but rather, can you *claim* it? That is, will you participate in it?

Thus, the next scheduled event predicted in the Word of God will take place when the Savior Himself appears in the air to catch up His own!

### An Illustration of the Rapture

Let us consider an illustration of the *harpazo*-*allasso* or rapture: A man is cleaning out his garage and discovers a small box filled with a mixture of tiny iron nails, wooden splinters, sawdust, and pieces of paper. Suppose he desires to save the nails. How could he quickly separate them from the wooden

splinters? If a magnet was available, the task would be quite simple. He would simply position the magnet over the box. Immediately all those objects possessing the same physical nature would be caught up to meet the magnet in the air.

If his wife were watching all this, spotting a particular object in the box, she might say: "Look at the sharp point on

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that! I bet the magnet will zap that up!" But unknown to her, that tiny item might be a sharp sliver of wood which would not be taken up. Or, she might conclude: "That fragment over there is a piece of wood for sure." However, in reality it could be a "backslidden" nail with some rust on it. But in both cases the magnet would quickly and accurately discern the character of the piece and act accordingly.

When Christ appears, He will not come especially for black or white people, for Catholics or Protestants, for Jews or Gentiles, but *only* for those individuals who possess the same nature as Himself. One of the most thrilling things God does for each repenting sinner is to give him or her the very mind of Christ and a brand new creation! (See 1 Cor. 2:16; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:24; 2 Peter 1:4).

### First Mention of the Rapture

The first mention of the rapture in the Bible is found in John 14:1-3: *Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

While the Old Testament prophets spoke in glowing terms of the Messiah's eventual return to earth and the establishment of His perfect kingdom upon the earth (Isa. 2:2-5; 9:6,7; 11:1-16; 32:1; 35:1-10; etc.), they knew absolutely nothing of that event whereby God Himself would (for a brief period of time) remove His people from off the earth. For whom will Jesus come? It is the view of this theological summary that Christ will come again for His church, which is composed of all saved people from Pentecost up to the rapture itself. (Other passages that speak of the rapture are 1 Cor. 1:7; Phil. 3:20; Titus 2:13; Heb. 9:28; 1 Thess. 4:13-17; 1 Cor. 15:51-57.)



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